



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 104th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 141

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1995

No. 39

Senate

(Legislative day of Wednesday, February 22, 1995)

The Senate met at 12 noon, on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Our prayer will be delivered by Father Paul Lavin, pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, the Reverend Paul Lavin, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, by the mouth of Your prophet Amos You tell us:

I hate and despise your feasts, I want no more of your burnt offerings, Let me have no more of the din of your chanting, no more of the strumming of your harps. But let justice flow like water, and integrity like an unfailing stream.

Help us understand that our only feast acceptable in Your sight will be our assistance to the poor and support of the oppressed. Let the practice of justice be the song of our Nation and let each of us offer a contrite and humble heart. Then when we lift up our voices in song to You our hearts will be clean and You will love our song.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, at 2 o'clock, leader time having been reserved, the leaders will each have 10 minutes, followed by a vote on the balanced budget amendment.

RECESS UNTIL 2 P.M.

Mr. DOLE. I now move that the Senate stand in recess until 2 p.m. today.

The motion was agreed to, and at 12:02 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. ASHCROFT).

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Senate resumed consideration of the joint resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, this debate has now continued for more than a month. There have been many conflicting statements and some misunderstandings, but no one should misinterpret this vote. It is not a vote on balancing the budget or reducing the deficit. Democrats have been committed to that for a long time, and our record is very, very clear. We demonstrated that in 1990 on a very tough vote. And, without any help from Republicans, we again demonstrated that in 1993; \$600 billion of deficit reduction later, we find ourselves here this afternoon. We are prepared to continue that commitment for as long as it takes to put this debt behind us for good.

So no one should be misled by the political rhetoric about our position. We will do what we have already done. We will work to bring down the debt with or without a constitutional amendment.

This debate really should not even have to be about the need for a constitutional amendment. By my count, there are over 70 Senators who favor one. More than two-thirds of this body favor writing a balanced budget requirement into the U.S. Constitution, and I am one of them.

What this debate is all about is what that amendment should say. And what our Republican colleagues have said is that it has to be this version, this

amendment, or no amendment at all. That is what this debate has been about.

Can we improve upon this amendment? Can we make sure that it is our best effort? We have made a number of suggestions that, in our view, would have vastly improved the language that we are about to vote on today. We proposed that we lay out just how we achieve our goal before we begin doing so, as any other undertaking of this importance and magnitude would require. The majority said, "No, we'll do that later. Trust us. Somehow it will all work out."

We proposed changes that deal with national emergencies. The majority said, "No, we'll do that later."

We proposed changes to put the Federal Government on the same level as other governments as we make important budgetary decisions. The majority said, "No. We'll probably have to do that later."

We proposed changes to give the Federal Government the ability to deal with recessions. The majority said, "No."

Most importantly, we proposed that Social Security not be used to pay off the debt. We have argued that we have not solved anything if we create one debt to erase another. If we go further into debt to senior citizens, even more than we have already, to bring down the debt to all taxpayers, then what have we accomplished? And, more importantly, perhaps, what have we lost?

I believe we will have lost our credibility. We will have lost our commitment to working people who are counting on us this afternoon. We will have lost our only real hope of balancing the budget correctly.

So let me make it very clear. The vast majority of Democrats support a balanced budget. Many support a constitutional amendment to require one. But virtually no Democrat supports

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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